2: Caroe S-4 (no date) 1953 RL1 Soviet Central Asia RL1

meadows in springtime. The fields are well watered, the water-courses well planted with mulberry, poplar and willow against a drop-scene of violet-coloured hills rising to spires of ever-lasting snow. From the mountain-skirts descend many clear streams, and springs well out shadowed by immemorial *chenars*.[1] Often, sheltering in a well-planted grove and watered by a rivulet, there stands a mosque antiquely carved in commemoration of the shrine of some local saint. Schuyler describes with delight the beauties of a refuge of this kind, reached after a thirsty march across a desolate valley strewn with gravel. He writes with understanding of the sense of refreshment to be gained from repose on ground so hallowed, whose beauty is the greater set against what Curzon describes as the wide and doleful plain, the sorrowful waste of a desert once at the bottom of a larger Caspian Sea. But there are none to tell us now whether the people can still find rest from the stridencies of Soviet life in garden cloisters such as this, holy places long before the advent of Islam. According to the Soviet press, the beauties of nature are banned as a subject for discourse or poetry.

There are other aspects of physical geography not without interest to the life of modern Turkistan. One of these is the influence on the movements of man of changes of climate that in this region took place either just before or after the opening of history. The clearest illustration is to be found in the discoveries of Aurel Stein in the archaeological field in Sinkiang. The remains of the cities he found buried in the Taklamakan sands prove that the water supply of the Tarim basin, when those cities flourished, was far more plentiful than it is today. There has in fact been a process of desiccation which, developing after the time when civilized man dwelt in cities, has led to mass migration out of Central Asia to more favourable

[1] The *platanus orientalis*, the eastern plane, possibly the finest of all deciduous trees. At its best in Kashmir, it flourishes from northern India in the east right across the Iranian and Anatolian plateaux as far as the Balkans in the west.

Turkestan

101
131 The neighbouring countries of Eastern and Western Turkestan, situated in the heart of Central Asia and separated from each other by the Tien Shan mountains, have little more in common than the name, which points to the fact that the country is peopled by Turkish tribes. Because of its extreme barrenness, which makes permanent settlement exceedingly difficult, and its commercially favourable situation between the vast territory of China and the ancient civilizations of Western Asia, Eastern Turkestan is essentially a transit country. In striking contrast to this desert land stands Western Turkestan, which has seen so many influxes of wandering tribes, so many invasions and different settlers, that it is in every respect one of the most interesting countries in the world.

161 The great differences existing between the two countries is best shown by the differences in the density of the population, which depends on the number of people which a country can feed. Western Turkestan (Russian Turkestan) has an extent of about 770,000 square miles, and is inhabited by about 9 million people. Thus the average population per square mile amounts to only 11.5, a fact which shows that large tracts of the country are uninhabitable deserts, and that on the whole it is sparsely populated. Compared with Eastern Turkestan, where only 1 1/2 million people inhabit 386,000 square miles, it is, however, a veritable paradise. Eastern Turkestan is one of the most thinly populated countries in the world.

[137]

000 there, but not at Vernyy. Yet vineyards grow here with some success.

361 The environs of Vernyy, with the ex-
133 ception of the mountains, are level and depressingly monotonous.

On the other hand, the Alatau mountain range, which closes off the horizon of Vernyy on the south, is usually picturesque. The altitude of the range rises to 14,000 feet, and
[137] the crests are always covered with snow. In the recent past, not only the slopes but also the foothills were covered with dense forests. Now only grass grows in the foothills, a bright emerald green which harmonizes with the dark green of the spruce forest growing in the mountains themselves. All this is topped by a crown of white snow, etched against the bright blue sky. In the mountains it rains frequently, and when it does the mountains are overcast, as though enveloped in a shroud, with dark clouds, which grow whiter, as they rise higher, /420/ assume all sorts of whimsical contours, and gradually diminish and vanish into space.

The foothills are a particularly beautiful sight in the spring time (in April), when the nomads spread a pall over them, that is, they burn the old grass to make the new grass grow better. The skies are filled with a glowing fire, and it fills the whole surrounding countryside with waves of light. Yet no matter how beautiful the Alatau mountains are from the side, the views in the mountains themselves are still more wonderful, and more striking. The thick undergrowth of the valleys and ravines, streams bubbling with foam against

361 their steep banks, pathways and narrow roads,
133 the snakes winding over the precipices, all this makes an unforgettable impression. With every step the views change, as though in a kaleidoscope and appear more and more striking and more effective.

[137] In the Alatau mountains the spruce is the tree which grows in the greatest abundance. After it, but much less abundant, are the apple trees, the apricots, the 'dzhida', the ashtrees, the juniper and even the birch.

361 The town of Vernyy is divided into the following parts: the Almata station (the old part of the town), the Almata settlement, the Tatar suburb, and Novyy (New town), actually the town which has developed since the beginning of the 1870s.

The latter part consists to a considerable degree of stone, or, more precisely, brick buildings, while the old parts of the town are built up exclusively of spruce wood.

[363] Both the old and the new town have been planned regularly. The streets are straight, level and wide, in most cases planted (although quite sparsely) with trees. There are often small gardens near the houses.

361 The wooden houses of Vernyy, which look
342 like Russian huts with wooden roofs, are almost all cold, first of all because they are caulked up not with moss (1) but with hay, which /421/ partly rots, and is partly dragged apart by the birds, for which reason cracks are always forming in the walls.

361 fruit, thanks to the southern position of the
132 country. Thus peach trees, apricots, pomegra-
[131] nates, vineyards, apples, pears and mulberry trees grow in the gardens of Kuldja.(1)

1. Footnote lacking.

All these fruits are small, however, and wild, for want of care. In Suidun (Suiting) which is forty versts west of Kuldja, the fruit is incomparably better, because when the Russians came there, the natives began to graft the Suidun fruit trees with the Kuldja ones. Even cotton plants grow in the environs of Kuldja, but their produce is limited because of the lack of enterprise. In Kuldja apricots ripen in the second half of June and peaches at the end of July and the beginning of August.

The prevailing wind is western, that is, from the lower reaches of the Ili. This wind brings humidity and rain with it.

361 Kuldja has a remarkably diversified
563 population. Here, as in all of the Ili valley in general, the most different nationalities are mixed together. Until the beginning of the 1860s, the government /429/ belonged to the Chinese, who dominated the more numerous Dungan and Taranchi peoples.

Conscious of their superiority over the natives, and distinguished by a markedly proud and arrogant character, the Chinese government and officials did not restrain themselves in ways of expressing their sovereignty. The people were overburdened with various taxes. In addition, the inhabitants of the Ili province

23: Shabad N-4 (no date) 1951 Rl Soviet Union Rl
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occur even in the early part of July; in the winter they fall to —49° F. During the summer the temperature rises to 60° F, and there is a great temperature difference between areas exposed to the sun and those in the shadow. The average yearly temperature in these mountain fastnesses approximates that on the shores of the White Sea.

The dry and extremely continental climate exerts a strong influence on the vegetation of Central Asia. Plants which adapt themselves to these conditions and are able to withstand drought periods are predominant in the desert and in the mountains. Steppe vegetation covers not only the plain but also the mountain slopes, reaching even to the area of permanent snows. In the high mountain valleys of the Tien Shan and the Pamir are salt steppes and salt lakes. Only a portion of the mountains is wooded, generally the northern and western slopes. Wooded belts (*tugay*) also occur along some rivers.

The desert vegetation consists of rather poor varieties. The plants are sometimes covered with thorns or fibers and are very sturdy. In the sandy desert the *saksaul* tree is the predominant type; of the other plants, umbrella-shaped plants, among which the Asafetida Giantfennel, exuding an ill-smelling resinous substance, and desert rhubarb, with large meaty leaves, are the most common. The long roots of the desert plants immobilize the sand, so that moving sand dunes are found only where no vegetation normally exists or where it has been destroyed by irrational grazing of livestock. Among the sands, occasional clay flats are covered sparsely by various types of wormwood and camelthorn, and saltwort is found in salt depressions. During spring and summer, the desert and steppe supports various bulbous plants, including wild onions. Along the rivers and the salt lakes there are thickets of *chiy*, a feathergrass often reaching a height of 12 feet, which is used by the local inhabitants for making mats and thatching roofs. The densely wooded clusters along streams include tamarisk, willow, poplar, and wild olive.

The mountain forests include deciduous trees on the lower slopes, with wild-growing walnut, pistachio, and apricot trees. Common European types, such as pine, oak, and linden, are completely lacking. In the eastern Tien Shan a type of fir is found. Above the forest zone there are rich mountain pastures, similar to Alpine meadows in the humid areas and to the Caspian steppe in the drier sections.

Central Asia has considerable reserves of mineral resources, but their exploitation has only recently been begun to any large extent. Along the mountain foothills there is a zone of petroleum deposits extending